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ABSTRACT

It is generally agreed that students (especially those from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds) are better educated in Catholic high schools than in public high schools. This book examines a broad range of Catholic high schools to determine if this difference is so, the reasons why, and whether this type of success can be transferred to the public sector. The Catholic schools appear to have an independent effect on achievement, especially in reducing disparities between disadvantaged and privileged students. The schools do this by de-emphasizing tracking; by creating a caring community within the school that values students for themselves, not just for how much knowledge they can absorb; and by the visible presence of faculty who assume multiple roles with students, such as teacher, athletic coach, and counselor. The book also reveals that the Catholic high school of today is a school committed to democratic education and the common good of all students. By contrast, public education is largely driven by the values of the marketplace, a radical individualism, and the pursuit of economic reward. It is argued that a constrained academic structure, a communal school organization, and an inspirational ideology are the major forces that shape the operations of individual Catholic schools and contribute to their overall effectiveness. Contains over 250 references and an index. (GLR)

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